



Newsletter

Homeland Security Must Be a Bay Area Priority

As the tragic bombings in London recently underscored, public transportation systems are vulnerable targets for terrorists. That does not mean they should go unused;

far from it, as Tom himself proved on the day of the London attack. He took a ride on the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) to emphasize for people of the region that

there was no indication of an immediate threat, and he called for increased federal funds for security.

Earlier this year, Tom prevailed in his long-standing push to adjust the way federal homeland security funding is distributed. Previously, the Department of Homeland Security allocated funds using a mechanical formula, leading to the absurd situation last year in which Wyoming received \$38 per resident while California received \$5. A remedy is now on the way after the House approved legislation to determine funding on the basis of need, threat, vulnerability and risk of terror attack.

"We must ensure that money is spent based on factors of threat and risk," Tom said. "But we need even more than just improved allocation. Thirty-two million Americans ride trains and buses everyday while three million fly in planes. Since 9/11 we have wisely spent \$18 billion on improving air security. We should continue to fight for increased security funds for the nation's transit systems."



Supporting public transportation-Tom was joined by Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Director Lynnette Sweet at the Millbrae BART station on the day of the terrorist attack on London's subway and bus network. They addressed the need for increased federal funding to improve security on BART.

Fighting for Human Rights Worldwide

Tom continues to press the fight for human rights on a variety of fronts in his capacity as the founding co-chairman of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus.

Earlier this year, he hailed the release by Chinese officials of political prisoner Rebiya Kadeer, a prominent business and women's rights leader of China's Uighur ethnic Muslim group. She was arrested in August 1999, while on her way to meet a congressional staff delegation visiting China. The arrest occurred only days after Ms. Kadeer's husband testified in Washington before the Caucus on the grave human rights situation of Uighurs in China. Ms. Kadeer came to Tom's office shortly after her release to thank him for his continued involvement in her case.

A few weeks ago, sanctions were renewed against the repressive government in Burma - sanctions that Tom initiated two years ago to pressure the ruling thugs in Rangoon to stop their brutal crackdown on opposition.

In Washington, he commemorated the 60th birthday of Nobel Laureate and Burmese democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who remains under house arrest. "We must remember that Aung San Suu Kyi is not simply another democracy campaigner toiling away in a totalitarian nation," he noted. "Her party actually won elections in 1990, only to find the halls of power locked when she tried to assume the role she and

her colleagues had won at the ballot box."

He also has spoken out repeatedly on behalf of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a leading democrat in an increasingly totalitarian Russia under President Vladimir Putin. Khodorkovsky was convicted on trumped-up, politically inspired charges and sentenced to nine years in prison. The Council of Europe affirmed that Putin initiated this persecution "to weaken an outspoken politi-

cal opponent, to intimidate other wealthy individuals, and to regain control over 'strategic' economic assets."

Tom concluded that this manipulation of justice was "tragic not only for Mr. Khodorkovsky but for all Russians, in that it presents another striking and dangerous precedent for the lack of the rule of law and is proof positive of a regression to Soviet-style tactics."

Spotlight on Legislation:

Opposing Patriot Act Extension

In late July Tom voted against extending the Patriot Act because the House bill lacked adequate protection of civil liberties.

"Our goal of homeland security must not compromise our fundamental values and liberties," he said. "America's greatest source of strength rests in the inalienable rights of its citizens. We must protect our security and our liberties at the same time."

The Patriot Act passed in 2001 with the understanding that it would immediately bolster efforts in the newly-launched war against terrorism. "These provisions were deliberately

not made permanent so that Congress could revisit the wisdom of such provisions periodically," Tom said. "The struggle against terrorism will be generational, but not permanent. We should not make permanent changes to law in connection with investigations related to that struggle."

Tom had repeatedly expressed concerns about two Patriot Act provisions in particular: one section that allows government investigators access to bookstore and library records, and another provision permitting "roving wiretap" orders that broaden the situations in which surveillance can be conducted.

Relieving the Nursing Shortage That Plagues Our State and the Nation

Tom’s legislation to alleviate the national shortage of qualified nurses, which hits California health care especially hard, has been signed into law.

“This is great news for our hospitals and their patients,” Tom said. “The lack of nurses in our hospitals has a direct effect on the quality of the health care that these facilities can provide.”

The legislation addresses a recent change

in procedures by the Citizenship and Immigration Services of the Department of Homeland Security, the federal agency responsible for processing citizenship and immigration applications, which imposed a cut-off date for admitting workers from the Philippines, China and India in order to process a backlog of other skilled workers applying for immigrant status. The legislation assigns unused, employment-based visas

to nurses from the countries that have over-subscribed their allotted visa number.

“While allowing more qualified nurses from the Philippines is not a panacea for our nursing shortage, we have been able to correct a bureaucratic regulation that was preventing qualified nurses from coming to our hospitals,” Tom said. “This is a positive first step to continue to ensure that America has the best health care in the world.”

Honoring Stellar Service By Local Military Heroes



Tom helped the family of Glenn Wray McCune prove that he had earned a Silver Star for his actions in World War I. McCune had been cited in the field for “gallantry in action” during the Meuse-Aronne offensive in France, but his citation was never followed up with the actual award. Tom presented the award posthumously at his San Mateo office to McCune’s son Robert and granddaughter Annette Daniels, both of San Bruno.



Tom recently met with Dennis Knibbs at the Capitol. Knibbs was raised in San Mateo and worked for the City of Burlingame for 20 years. During the meeting, Tom presented a long overdue Bronze Star to Knibbs. Knibbs earned the medal during his Navy service in the Pacific during World War II - he aided a wounded Marine under heavy fire at Iwo Jima.



Saving Social Security... From Unwarranted, Unwise Privatization Plan

Social Security is not in a crisis. The only threat to it at the moment is a number of misguided semi-privatization plans; this is no way to address the long-term fiscal challenges of one of our most equitable social programs, now celebrating 70 successful years of operation.

Tom held a town hall meeting recently to help constituents separate the fact from the fiction. Hyperbolic or otherwise misleading statements have no place in a debate of such importance.

While we are told that the sky is falling, the reality of the situation strongly suggests otherwise. With

some minor adjustments, Social Security will be there for generations to come for our seniors, families who have lost breadwinners, disabled workers and young workers now entering the job market. Social Security is the core of old-age support and was intended as an income supplement and a crucial safety net for seniors as well as children - an insurance program, not an investment scheme. We must preserve Social Security through sound fiscal discipline and legitimate policy adjustments to meet the needs of future generations.

Local Young Artist Now Displays Her Work in DC

School of the Arts junior Elissa Gee got a sunny start to her summer and a boost to her artistic future: Her painting, titled “Not A Labor of Love,” was chosen for display in the halls of Congress after she submitted it to the San Mateo office in a contest.

“I am pleased and proud to have this opportunity to showcase the abilities that schools in our district nurture,” Tom said. “It is deeply impressive when talented students have the courage to realize their artistic vision -- and, even more, to invite others to view the result.”

Elissa was one of 15 artists from San Mateo High School and San Francisco’s School of the Arts to enter the annual Congressional Art Competition. Elissa’s subtle and evocative work is now hanging in a long hallway connecting the Capitol with the House office buildings, where thousands of visitors will view it during the next year.

Protecting Public Broadcasting A Valuable Service

Tom fought to ensure that the House dropped a provision in a federal spending bill that would have dramatically slashed federal funds for public broadcasting.

“We cannot let one of our country’s best defenses against ignorance fall victim to ideologues who see a liberal boogeyman behind every tree,” Lantos said. “NPR and PBS, along with their local affiliates, provide exceptionally good educational and public affairs programs. Millions of parents rely on the likes of ‘Arthur’ and ‘Sesame Street’ to help their kids learn the basics. And there is no doubt that the news and documentary shows on public radio and TV are, collectively, the best around.”

A long-standing member of the Public Broadcasting Caucus, Tom urged other House members to renounce a provision in a funding measure that would have cut next year’s funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) by 25 percent.



A long-standing supporter of public broadcasting, Tom recently met with representatives of public TV, including the Cookie Monster, at an event on Capitol Hill to discuss the future of federal funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Cleaning Up Professional Sports for the Sake of Our Children

The Government Reform Committee has held a series of high-profile hearings to examine how professional sports are handling the issue of steroid use, or failing to do so.

Even though some sports commentators grumbled at the start that this matter was not under Congressional jurisdiction (they were wrong), constituents overwhelmingly supported Tom’s position and his leadership.

During the hearing on Major League Baseball’s new policy on self-policing the use of steroids, which generated the

most media coverage because it involved some of the biggest players in the game, Tom listened sympathetically to the heart-rending testimony of parents of children who fell victim to steroid use, along with professional scientific views on the ill effects of steroids. He said he was struck by the arrogant way in which baseball executives had handled the matter.

“I’d like to step back for a moment from baseball, and to put this hearing into broader perspective,” he said. “Because in many ways, what we are dealing with

is the problem of a society that provides mind-boggling opportunities to some individuals, with obscenely excessive rewards, and these individuals - whether they are corporate crooks, CEOs who eventually go to prison; or people viewed as role models - consider themselves somehow not bound by the laws of society that apply to the rest of us.

“And in many ways, this hearing is also reminiscent of the tobacco hearings we held in Congress - a very profitable industry which has grown very arrogant and is unprepared to play by the rules.”

Federal Interference in California’s Medical Marijuana Law

The U.S. Supreme Court earlier this year dealt a serious blow to the therapeutic

use of marijuana to alleviate symptoms from an array of serious illnesses, as

sanctioned by law in California. Congress passed up one chance to reverse this significant setback in states’ rights and compassionate medical care, but it still has a chance to take action.

“Congress needs to act now to ensure that the thousands of law-abiding Californians who use marijuana to alleviate their suffering do so without harassment by an overzealous Justice Department,” Tom said.

The court’s decision in *Gonzales v. Raich* granted the federal government the power to prosecute patients who use marijuana for medicinal purposes. This encroaches irresponsibly on the sovereignty of states in intrastate commerce, a right guaranteed by our Constitution.

Tom voted for a measure in Congress to ensure that federal funds could not be used to prosecute those who use medicinal marijuana in states allowing it. Later this year, the House is likely to consider a bill that would reclassify the drug so it could be used by prescription everywhere. Tom is a leading co-sponsor of this “States Rights to Medical Marijuana Act.”



Summer Public Service - *Students are sacrificing some surf and sun time to serve as interns in Tom’s San Mateo office. Pictured are summer interns (left to right) Cornell University senior Tina Tsai; Christine Chang of Millbrae, starting at Berkeley this fall; San Mateo resident Jessie Tiffany, soon to be a sophomore at American University; Stephen Tu of Fremont, about to start at the University of the Pacific; and Menlo High School senior Peter McCall of Hillsborough.*

Devil's Slide Tunnel Project Off to a Great Start

Tom was proud to take part in the ground-breaking earlier this year for the tunnel at Devil's Slide on the San Mateo County coast, particularly because of his long-standing and central role in getting this important transportation project under way.

Devil's Slide is the steeply eroding coastal ridge between Pacifica and Half Moon Bay that includes a portion of Pacific Highway 1. Landslides, rock-slides, and mudslides have severed this transportation artery many times since its construction in 1937.

After damage from El Niño closed the road for several months in the early 1980s, Tom sought a solution. He brought a subcommittee of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to the region for hearings and a first-hand look. This led to an initial \$50 million in federal funds to create an alternative road. Studies showed that an above-ground bypass would not adequately protect the watersheds, wildlife, and scenic beauty of the site, and a consensus developed around a tunnel plan, which was affirmed by a ballot initiative in 1996 that won 71% of the vote.

At the start of this year, Tom was instrumental in securing \$150 million from the Department of Transportation for the construction of the new tunnel.

"These funds had been held up for more than 20 years, and it was a triumph when they were finally released," he said. "A long-term solution for Devil's Slide has been a long time in the making. It is gratifying that this part of the battle is finally over, and the federal money will be there to make this project a reality."



Digging in - Tom delivered the keynote speech at the ground-breaking for the tunnel project in Pacifica.

How Can I Help You?

Internet
www.house.gov/lantos/

California
San Mateo County telephone: (650) 342-0300
San Francisco telephone: (415) 566-5257

Washington D.C.
Telephone: (202) 225-3531
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Saving the Farallon Islands

Tom successfully fought back a legislative attempt to expand potentially damaging public access to the Farallon National Wildlife Refuge.

"Public access nearly destroyed this natural sanctuary, but since it came under the protection of the refuge, wildlife has flourished," he said. "Even limited public access to the Farallones will hurt the extraordinary birds and marine mammals protected there."

The 211-acre refuge is referred to by some as "California's Galapagos." More than 250,000 seabirds and five species of seals and sea lions call the islands home.

Tom launched and led the effort to reverse legislation that had been introduced to open up public access to this delicate natural environment; the legislation was subsequently dropped.

TOM LANTOS
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
Official Business

 M.C.
PRSRT-STD
W/S Carrier Route

**POSTAL PATRON-LOCAL
12th CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
CALIFORNIA**